

INSIDE TODAY

U.S. NEWS

BAYH STEPS DOWN



Sen. Evan Bayh, D-Ind., speaks at a news conference announcing he will not seek re-election in Indianapolis, Monday, Feb. 15, 2010. Bayh, a centrist Democrat from a Republican-leaning state, is serving his second six-year term in the Senate.

Read more on Page A4

SPORTS NEWS

NBA'S ALL STAR



East All-Star Dwyane Wade of the Miami Heat holds the MVP trophy after the East beat the West 141-139 in the NBA All-Star basketball game Sunday, Feb. 14, 2010, at Cowboys Stadium in Arlington, Texas.

Read more on Page A14

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Gov't: 34 deaths alleged in Toyotas since 2000

KEN THOMAS

Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Complaints of deaths connected to sudden acceleration in Toyota vehicles has surged in recent weeks, with the alleged death toll reaching 34 since 2000, according to new consumer data gathered by the government.

Complaints to a database maintained by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration about the popular Toyota Prius hybrid grew by nearly 1,000 in just over a week.

On Monday, Transportation Department spokeswoman Olivia Alair said NHTSA is quickly gathering information to help guide the government's examination of sudden acceleration, the Prius braking system and other safety issues.

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In this Feb. 10, 2010 file photo, Toyota Group Vice President Bob Carter introduces the 2011 Toyota Avalon at the 2010 Chicago Auto Show in Chicago. Carter on Monday, Feb. 15, 2010 told reporters at the National Automobile Dealers Association Convention in Orlando, Fla., that it is focused on repairing customer cars and restoring their faith in the brand, which has had a reputation for bulletproof reliability for years.

Associated Press

Taliban step up attacks in Afghan town

ALFRED de

MONTESQUIOU,

Associated Press Writer

MARJAH, Afghanistan (AP)

— Taliban fighters stepped up counterattacks Monday against Marines and Afghan soldiers in the militant stronghold of Marjah, slowing the allied advance to a crawl despite Afghan government claims that the insurgents are broken and on the run. Taliban fighters appeared to be slipping under cover of darkness into compounds already deemed free of weapons and explosives, then opening fire on the Marines from behind U.S. lines. Also on Monday, NATO said five civilians were accidentally killed and two wounded by an airstrike when they were mistakenly believed to have been planting roadside bombs in Kandahar province, east of the Marjah offensive.

The airstrike happened one day after 12 people, half of them children, were killed by two U.S. missiles that struck



U.S. Marines from 3rd Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment take cover during a firefight as Taliban snipers fire on their position in Marjah in Afghanistan's Helmand province on Sunday Feb. 14, 2010.

Associated Press

a house on the outskirts of Marjah.

Continued on Page 6

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GOVT: 34 DEATHS

Continued from Front Page

Toyota Motor Corp. has recalled 8.5 million vehicles globally during the past four months because of problems with gas pedals, floor mats and brakes, threatening the safety and quality reputation of the world's No. 1 automaker. The government typically receives a surge in complaints following a recall. None has yet been verified.

The new complaints reflect the heightened awareness of the massive recalls among the public and underscore a flurry of lawsuits on behalf of drivers alleging deaths and injuries in Toyota crashes. Three congressional hearings are planned on the Toyota recalls.

In the past three weeks, consumers have told the government about nine crashes involving 13 alleged deaths between 2005 and 2010 due to accelerator problems, according to a NHTSA database. The latest complaints come on top of information from consumers alleging 21 deaths from 2000 to the end of last year.

The database also shows that new complaints skyrocketed over the 2010 Prius gas-electric hybrid, which was recalled last week to replace braking software.

When NHTSA opened its investigation of Prius on Feb. 3, the government had received 124 consumer

complaints. Through Feb. 11, the government had a total of 1,120 complaints alleging 34 crashes, six injuries and no deaths.

The government has renewed an investigation into potential electromagnetic problems in vehicles built by Toyota and other manufacturers. Consumer groups have pointed to potential electrical problems while the company has said recalls to fix sticking gas pedals or accelerators that can become jammed will address the problem.

Toyota spokeswoman Martha Voss said the company takes "all customer reports seriously and will, of course, look into new claims." Toyota was taking steps to improve quality control and investigate customer complaints more aggressively, Voss said.

Testing by Toyota, NHTSA and Exponent, an outside consulting firm hired by Toyota, has found no evidence of problems with Toyota's electronics, said Toyota Vice President Bob Carter at the National Automobile Dealers Association convention in Orlando, Fla.

"There is no problem with the electronic throttle system in Toyotas," Carter said Monday. "There's not anything that can even remotely lead you in that direction." Carter said Exponent was told to tear the components apart to try to find anything wrong and initial tests could find nothing.

Carter said Toyota has repaired about 500,000 of the 2.3 million vehicles recalled over a potentially sticky gas pedal.

Toyota has received many complaints over vehicle speed control in the 2009 and 2008 model years, according to an Associated Press analysis of government data.

In 2009, Toyota received the most complaints that year — a total of 130 for Toyota, Lexus and Scion vehicles. Ford and its Mercury brand received the second-highest with 14, followed by General Motors and Honda vehicles with 9.

Among Toyota vehicles in the 2009 model year, the Camry led the list of models with 52 complaints, followed by Corolla (17), Tacoma (16) and Prius (13).

The AP found eight of the top 10 vehicles with complaints over vehicle speed control were manufactured by Toyota.

In the 2008 model year, Toyota vehicles received 176 complaints of vehicle speed control, followed by Ford with 44 and Chrysler with 25. In that year, Prius had 31 complaints, followed by Tacoma with 28 and Camry with 25.

Since Jan. 27, NHTSA has processed 686 complaints from consumers about problems related to "vehicle speed control" on cars and trucks manufactured by Toyota, nearly all of them



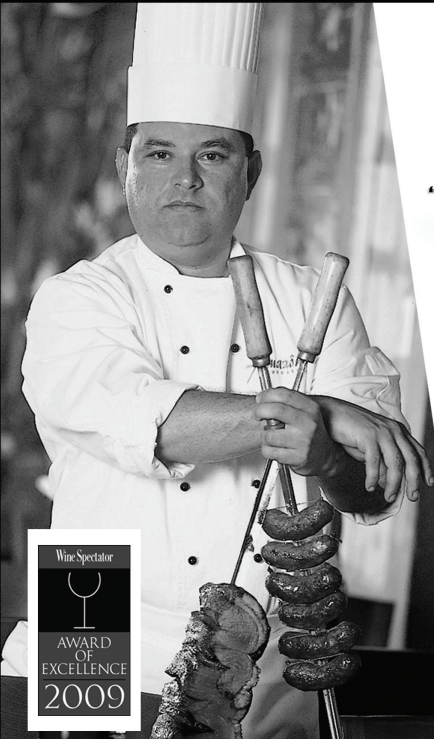
On this Feb. 8, 2010, photo, a modified accelerator pedal from a Toyota 2007 Hybrid Camry is replaced at Jack Taylor's Alexandria Toyota-Scion in Alexandria, Va. Complaints of deaths connected to sudden acceleration in Toyota vehicles has surged in recent weeks, with the alleged death toll reaching 34 since 2000, according to new consumer data gathered by the government.

Associated Press

submitted through NHTSA's Web site or by e-mail.

Regarding the AP analysis, Alair, the Transportation Department spokeswoman,

said Toyota had a large market share of vehicles in the U.S. but said she could not comment on the AP figures without further analysis. □



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Sen. Evan Bayh, D-Ind., center, speaks while flanked by his sons Nick, left, and Beau, right and wife Susan at a news conference announcing he will not seek re-election in Indianapolis, Monday, Feb. 15, 2010. Bayh, a centrist Democrat from a Republican-leaning state, is serving his second six-year term in the Senate.

Associated Press

ALAN FRAM,
Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Sen. Evan Bayh, a centrist Democrat who was on Barack Obama's short list of

vice presidential candidate prospects in 2008, announced Monday that he won't seek a third term in Congress, giving Republicans a chance to pick up a Senate seat in the

Dem. Sen. Evan Bayh to retire

November elections.

The departure of Bayh continues a recent exodus from Congress among both Democrats and Republicans, including veteran Democrats Christopher Dodd of Connecticut and Patrick Kennedy of Rhode Island.

The announcements have sprung up in rapid-fire fashion amid polls showing a rising anti-incumbent fervor and voter anger over Washington partisanship, high unemployment, federal deficits and lucrative banking industry bonuses.

Obama thanked Bayh for his years of public service.

"During that time, he has fought tirelessly for Indiana's working families, reaching across the aisle on issues ranging from job creation and economic growth to fiscal responsibility and national security," Obama said in a written statement. "I look forward to continuing to work with him on these critical challenges throughout the rest of the year."

His retirement from a Senate seat from Republican-leaning Indiana also adds to the struggle Democrats will face this fall to prevent an erosion of the 59 votes they have in the 100-seat chamber. It follows Republican Scott Brown's stunning January upset to take Edward Kennedy's former seat in Massachusetts, which ended the Democrats' 60-vote supermajority and imperiled the party's drive for sweeping health care reform, Obama's top domestic priority.

Bayh, who won the Indiana seat to the Senate in 1998, attributed his decision to the bitter partisan divides that have dominated Congress in recent years, though he praised his colleagues as hard workers devoting to serving the public.

"To put it in words I think most people can understand: I love working for the people of Indiana, I love helping our citizens make the most of their lives, but I do not love Congress," Bayh said at a news conference Indianapolis, where he was joined by his wife and two sons.

"My decision should not be interpreted for more than it is, a very difficult, deeply personal one," he said. "I am an executive at heart. I value my independence. I am not motivated by strident partisanship or ideology." Bayh, 54, said he believed he would have been re-elected this November, despite "the current challenging environment." He said it was time for him to "contribute to society in another way," either by creating jobs with a business, leading a college or university, or running a charity.

"After all these years, my passion for service to our fellow citizens is undiminished, but my desire to do so by serving in Congress has waned," Bayh said at the news conference. The Democrats will have to scramble to find a replacement candidate for Bayh's seat. Friday is the filing deadline for the May primary, although the party would have until June 30 to select a replacement candidate.

Bayh's name was among a handful of well-known Democrats prominently mentioned as possible vice presidential candidates in both Sen. John Kerry's 2004 run for the presidency and Obama's successful run for the White House. He was believed to have been on Obama's short list. Obama settled on then-Sen. Joseph Biden.

Less than two weeks ago, former Indiana Sen. Dan Coats,

a Republican, announced that he would try to reclaim his old seat from Bayh.

Indiana Republican Chairman Murray Clark said he had high hopes his party would win Bayh's seat even before the senator's announcement. He said Bayh's votes in favor of the federal stimulus package and the Senate's health care overhaul bill had damaged his moderate image and his re-election prospects.

North Dakota's Democratic Sen. Byron Dorgan also is retiring, and his party doesn't have anyone to challenge the Republican, Gov. John Hoeven. Democrats also failed to recruit their top candidate in Delaware. Biden's son, Beau Biden, eschewed a run against Republican Mike Castle.

Bayh is serving his second six-year term in the Senate, and is a centrist Democrat from a Republican-leaning state.

Bayh served two terms as Indiana's governor before winning the first of his two Senate terms in 1998. He had until recent weeks been regarded as a near certainty for re-election, having raised nearly \$13 million for his campaign and facing little-known Republican opposition until national Republicans recruited Coats to enter the race.

Bayh's name was already well known when he first ran for political office in 1986, winning the race for Indiana secretary of state that year. His father, Birch, won the first of three terms in the U.S. Senate in 1962 and was an unabashed liberal.

The younger Bayh ran for governor in 1988 on a platform of fiscal responsibility, reducing what he considered to be a bloated government bureaucracy and opposing tax increases. He served two terms as Indiana's governor. □

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Husband: Prof went to range before shooting

DESIREE HUNTER

Associated Press Writer

HUNTSVILLE, Alabama (AP)

— The husband of an Alabama professor accused of fatally shooting three colleagues said Monday that he'd gone with her to a shooting range recently but that he didn't know where she got the gun she used for practice that day.

James Anderson told The Associated Press that his wife, Amy Bishop, didn't do anything unusual in the days before Friday's shooting. Bishop, a Harvard-educated neurobiologist, is accused of pulling a gun at a faculty meeting and shooting six people, three fatally. Two of the survivors remained in critical condition Monday.

Anderson said he knew his wife had a gun, but didn't know when or how she got it. "I really don't know how she got it, or where she got it

from," he said.

Police have previously said Bishop had no permit for the gun they believe she used in the shooting, and investigators said they didn't know where she got it. It's not clear if that was the same gun that her husband knew about.

Bishop's husband said nothing unusual happened on their trip to the shooting range, and that she didn't reveal why she took an interest in target practice. Nothing in her behavior before the shooting foreshadowed the violence last week, either, he said.

"She was just a normal professor," he said.

On Monday, some victims relatives were questioning how Bishop was hired at the university in 2003 after she was questioned years ago in separate criminal probes.

In 1986, Bishop shot and killed her 18-year-old brother

with a shotgun at their Massachusetts home. She told police at the time that she had been trying to learn how to use the gun, which her father had bought for protection, when it accidentally discharged.

Authorities released her and said the episode was a tragic accident. She was never charged, though current Braintree, Mass., police Chief Paul Frazier questions how the investigation was handled.

Her husband said Monday he had known about her brother being shot, but said "it was an accident. That's all I knew about it."

In another incident, The Boston Globe reported that Bishop and her husband were questioned by investigators looking into a pipe bomb sent to one of Bishop's colleagues, Dr. Paul Rosenberg, at Children's Hospital Boston in 1993. The bomb did not



go off, and nobody was ever charged.

James Anderson defended himself and his wife as innocent people questioned by investigators casting a wide net. He said the case "had a

dozen people swept up in this and everybody was a subject, not a suspect."

"There was never any indictment, arrest, nothing, and then everyone was cleared after five years," he said. □

Police: Four dead, 1 missing in mid-New Jersey plane crash

Geoff Mulvihill

Associated Press Writer

WALL TOWNSHIP, N.J. — A small plane preparing to land broke apart and nose-dived into a snowy field alongside a runway Monday, a witness reported. Four people are dead and one missing after the crash, which happened in an affluent section of the state, officials said.

The crash was reported at 3:45 p.m. Monday at Monmouth Executive Airport, about 35 miles east of Trenton, said Federal Aviation Administration spokesman Jim Peters. The weather was overcast, but no precipitation was falling. There's "a very large debris field" at the airport, Peters said.

Capt. Tim Clayton of the Wall Township police said authorities have identified four bodies. The names of the victims were not immediately released.

Peters said the plane was a Cessna 337 Skymaster, a make known in aviation circles as a "Push Me, Pull You" because its twin engines are located in the nose and behind the fuselage. It was registered to Jack Air LLC, a Wilmington, Del., company. A telephone listing for the company was not immediately available.

Peters said the National Transportation Safety Board would be the lead agency in the investigation into the cause of the crash.

Dana McNally, 39, of Wall, told the Asbury Park Press of Neptune that she witnessed

the crash. McNally said it appeared the pilot was coming in for a landing and attempted to abort. But something — possibly the tail of the plane — broke off, she said. The plane veered to the right and nose-dived into a snowy field alongside a runway, McNally said.

"It hit face first," McNally said. "It just went right in (to the field) nose first."

Wayne Matichuk, 43, of Wall Township, was among a group on a sledding hill when he saw the plane coming in low.

Matichuk told The Star-Ledger of Newark that the plane did not have its landing gear down, and "it seemed like he was going side to side."

The pilot pulled up and "a piece of the plane fell off," Matichuk said. Then the right wing dipped and the plane rolled over before crashing upside-down into the ground, he said.

The plane crashed upside-down into the ground, he said.

"It was so surreal. After it happened, every one of us turned around and said, 'Did that really just happen?'" said Matichuk.

The airport, formally known as Allaire Airport, is located near the Jersey shore. Monmouth County is a largely affluent area of central New Jersey that is home to many business executives, upscale seashore communities and entertainers, including Bruce Springsteen and Jon Bon Jovi. □

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A U.S. soldier returns fire as others run for cover during a firefight with insurgents in the Badula Qulp area, West of Lashkar Gah in Helmand province, southern Afghanistan, Sunday, Feb. 14, 2010. The area is near Marjah, where U.S. Marines are conducting an offensive against the Taliban.

TALIBAN ATTACKS

Continued from Front Page
 Afghan officials said Monday that three Taliban fighters were in the house at the time

of the attack. On the third day of the main attack on Marjah, Afghan commanders spoke optimistically about progress

Associated Press

in the town of about 80,000 people, the linchpin of the Taliban logistical and opium poppy smuggling network in the militant-influenced south. Brig. Gen. Sher Mohammad Zazai, commander of Afghan troops in the south, told reporters in nearby Lashkar Gah that there had been "low resistance" in the town, adding "soon we will have Marjah cleared of enemies."

Interior Minister Hanif Atmar said many insurgent fighters had already fled Marjah, possibly heading for Pakistan. In Marjah, however, there was little sign the Taliban were broken. Instead, small, mobile teams of insurgents repeatedly attacked U.S. and Afghan troops with rocket, rifle and rocket-propelled grenade fire. Insurgents moved close enough to the main road to fire repeatedly at columns of mine-clearing vehicles.

At midday at least six large gunbattles were raging across the town, and helicopter gunships couldn't cover all the different fighting locations.

Allied officials have reported only two coalition deaths so far — one American and one Briton killed Saturday. There have been no reports of wounded. Afghan officials said at least 27 insurgents have been killed so far in the offensive.

Nonetheless, the harassment tactics and the huge number

of roadside bombs, mines and boobytraps planted throughout Marjah have succeeded in slowing the movement of allied forces through the town. After daylong skirmishes, some Marine units had barely advanced at all by sundown.

As long as the town remains unstable, NATO officials cannot move to the second phase — restoring Afghan government control and rushing in aid and public services to win over inhabitants who have been living under Taliban rule for years.

Afghan President Hamid Karzai approved the assault on Marjah only after instructing NATO and Afghan commanders to be careful about harming civilians. "This operation has been done with that in mind," the top NATO commander, U.S. Gen. Stanley McChrystal, said Monday.

Despite those instructions, NATO said two U.S. rockets veered off target by up to 600 yards and slammed into a home Sunday outside Marjah, killing 12 people. Six children were among the dead, a NATO military official confirmed Monday, speaking on condition of anonymity because the information had not been formally released.

In London, Britain's top military officer, Air Chief Marshal Sir Jock Stirrup, called the missile strike a "very serious setback" to

efforts to win the support of local communities, who are from the same Pashtun ethnic group as the Taliban.

"This operation ... is not about battling the Taliban. It is about protecting the local population, and you don't protect them when you kill them," he said in an interview with the British Broadcasting Corp.

NATO said the Kandahar airstrike was ordered Monday after a joint NATO-Afghan patrol saw people digging along a path "and believed that the individuals" were planting a roadside bomb. When they realized their mistake, troops flew the wounded to a NATO hospital, the statement said.

"We regret this tragic accident and offer our sympathies to the families of those killed and injured," said Maj. Gen. Michael Regner, the NATO command's deputy chief of staff for joint operations. "Our combined forces take every precaution to minimize civilian casualties, and we will investigate this incident to determine how this happened."

About 15,000 U.S., Afghan and British troops are taking part in the massive offensive around Marjah area — the largest southern town under Taliban control. The offensive is the biggest joint operation since the 2001 U.S.-led invasion of Afghanistan.

The main attack began before dawn Saturday when dozens of helicopters dropped hundreds of Marines and Afghan soldiers into the heart of the city. Ground troops began moving just before sunrise, using makeshift bridges to cross the irrigation canals ringing the town because the main bridge was so heavily mined. □

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Clinton: Iran is becoming a military dictatorship

ROBERT BURNS

AP National Security Writer

RIYADH, Saudi Arabia (AP)

— U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton said Monday Iran is sliding into a military dictatorship, a new assessment suggesting a rockier road ahead for U.S.-led efforts to stop Tehran from obtaining a nuclear weapon.

As the first high-level Obama administration official to make such an accusation, Clinton was reflecting an ever-dimming outlook for persuading Iran to negotiate limits on its nuclear program, which it has insisted is intended only for peaceful purposes. The U.S. and others — including the two Gulf countries Clinton visited Sunday and Monday — believe Iran is headed for a nuclear bomb capability.

Clinton also was revealing the logic of the administration's plan to target the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps with a new round

of international sanctions intended to compel Iran to curb its nuclear ambitions before it increases the likelihood of a military clash.

Clinton flew to Riyadh, the Saudi capital, and then was driven in King Abdullah's private bus about 65 miles northeast to Rawdat Khurayim, a secluded royal hunting retreat where the vacationing king hosted her for lunch — and where a large-screen TV was on. Afterward they met privately in his elaborately appointed tent, which includes five crystal chandeliers in the reception room. Clinton also met with Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Saud al-Faisal in Riyadh and later was flying to Jeddah on the Red Sea coast. Earlier in the day, in Doha, Qatar, Clinton spoke bluntly about Iranian behavior and what she called the Obama administration's view of Iran as increasingly dominated by the Revolutionary Guard

Corps.

Last week the U.S. Treasury Department announced that it was freezing the assets in U.S. jurisdictions of a Revolutionary Guard general and four subsidiaries of a previously penalized construction company he runs because of their alleged involvement in producing and spreading weapons of mass destruction.

The Revolutionary Guard has long been a pillar of Iran's regime as a force separate from the ordinary armed forces. The Guard now has a hand in every critical area, including missile development, oil resources, dam building, road construction, telecommunications and nuclear technology.

It also has absorbed the paramilitary Basij as a full-fledged part of its command structure — giving the militia greater funding and a stronger presence in Iran's internal



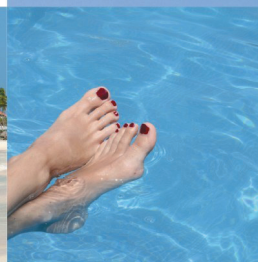
U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton speaks during a press conference with Saudi Arabian Foreign Minister Prince Saud al-Faisal, right, in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, Monday, Feb. 15, 2010.

Associated Press

politics. “The evidence we’ve seen of this increasing decision-making (by the Revolutionary Guard) cuts across all areas of Iranian security policy, and certainly nuclear policy is at the core of it,” Clinton told reporters flying with her from Doha to Saudi Arabia. Asked if the U.S. was planning a military

attack on Iran, Clinton said “no.”

The United States is focused on gaining international support for sanctions “that will be particularly aimed at those enterprises controlled by the Revolutionary Guard, which we believe is in effect supplanting the government of Iran,” she said. □



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Cyclone Rene pounds Tonga, major damage in capital



A building at the Are Tamanu Resort on the atoll of Aitutaki in the Cook Islands damaged after tropical cyclone Pat hit early Thursday, Feb. 11, 2010. Cyclone Pat spared the main island of Rarotonga but was one of the biggest storms to hit the low-lying coral atoll of Aitutaki in about 20 years, damaging 90 percent of the houses on the island of 2,000 people.

PESI FONUA

Associated Press Writer

NUKU'ALOFA, Tonga (AP) — Tropical Cyclone Rene pounded Tonga with powerful winds overnight, causing major damage to buildings in the capital city, tearing off roofs, downing trees and cutting power and phone lines

in the South Pacific island nation.

When phone service was restored early Tuesday, police said they had no immediate reports of death or injury during the storm that has hammered the three main island groups of the kingdom for more than 24 hours.

Associated Press

"There's widespread damage to crops ... (and) to buildings," police commander Chris Kelley told New Zealand's National Radio. "Power has been off all night, there's trees across roads, plus power lines. There has really been quite a bit of devastation."

The nation's National Disaster Committee was meeting Tuesday to begin assessing damage nationwide, described by its deputy director Mali'u Takai as possibly the worst in 50 years.

Nuku'alofa businesswoman Lee Miller said the night was nerve-racking.

"Our home is OK apart from some water leaks," she told National Radio. "There is severe tree damage, many power lines are down."

Miller said the capital's port area is "utterly devastated ... we're still getting big 50 knot (55 miles per hour, 88 kilometers per hour) gusts here and the sea is still coming over the sea wall," she told

National Radio. She said that yachts and fishing vessels all appeared secure but one barge had been tossed up on a reef.

Cyclone forecasters in Fiji said that by midmorning the storm was 95 miles south of Nuku'alofa and its force was expected to deteriorate as it moved into open sea.

The cyclone had been downgraded to a Category 3, packing winds up to 130 miles an hour at its center.

Prior to losing contact with the capital, Nuku'alofa, on Monday, the Ha'apai island group located in the center of the archipelago, had faced "very destructive hurricane force winds" with gusts of 143 miles an hour, the Meteorological Office said. Heavy rain, thunderstorms, sea swells and flooding were expected.

In the northern Vava'u islands group, contact was lost early Monday just after Rene hit. Coastal areas flooded as roiling seas surged ashore.

Kelley said no deaths or injuries had been reported in Vava'u or Ha'apai, and the biggest impact so far was on crops.

"We are aware of some damage to buildings but nothing serious at this stage," he said. Heavy rains had flooded many areas, while powerful winds tore down banana palms and fruit from mango and breadfruit trees.

Takai said at one point Monday evening that it had become too dangerous to go outside.

"It's so noisy, it's like ... a locomotive is running around. It's getting bad now, hopefully this is the worst part of it," he told National Radio.

Hank Gros, who runs a tourism business in Neiafu, the main town in the Vava'u group, said winds there had decreased Monday afternoon, but residents faced up to six days without electricity because all lines were down. He said damage overall was less than expected. □



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Head-on train crash in Belgium kills at least 18

SLOBODAN LEKIC

Associated Press Writer

BRUSSELS (AP) — A commuter train ran a stop light during morning rush hour and collided head-on with another train in a Brussels suburb Monday, killing at least 18 people and injuring 55 in Belgium's deadliest train wreck in decades, officials said.

The impact peeled away the front of one train car and threw at least one other off the tracks, causing amputations and other severe injuries, witnesses and officials said. Train service across Western Europe was disrupted.

The Flanders provincial crisis center said in a statement carried by the Belgian media that at least 18 people were killed. Thirty survivors remained hospitalized, several of them in a "very serious" condition, the statement said.

Lodewijk De Witte, the governor of the province of Flemish Brabant, told reporters that one train "apparently did not heed a stop light."

The trains collided in light snow just outside of the station at Buizingen around 8:30 a.m..

The force of the collision smashed one train deep into the front of the other, tearing back the metal sides. The trains tipped high into the air and broke overhead power lines.

One of the front cars appeared to have careened across the tracks, demolishing a small maintenance shed next to the rail line. A high concrete wall around the train yard seemed to have kept debris from hitting nearby houses. It appeared to be the country's worst train wreck since 1954, when a crash near Leuven killed 20 German soccer fans and seriously injured 40 others. In March 28, 2001, eight people died when a crowded train plowed into an empty train driving on the wrong tracks.

Belgian National Railways spokesman Jochen

Goovaerts said his agency was awaiting the outcome of the investigation before discussing the cause of Monday's accident.

"It was a nightmare," Christian Wampach, 47, told The Associated Press after medical workers bandaged his head at a sports complex where the less seriously injured were treated. Those hurt more badly were taken to several hospitals in and near Brussels. The Red Cross appealed for blood donations.

"We were thrown about for about 15 seconds. There were a number of people injured in my car but I think all the dead were in the first car," said Wampach, who was in the third car of a Brussels-bound train.

Photos from the scene showed rescuers pulling the wounded from a car that appeared to have tipped onto its side. Other emergency officials rushed victims on stretchers along the tracks.

"When we came out we saw dead bodies lying next to the tracks, some mutilated," said Patricia Lallemand, 40, who was in the same car as Wampach, and was unhurt.

Wira Leire, 20, said he was woken by a loud crashing sound and leapt to his bedroom window to see two cars jackknifed directly in front of his home.

"There were people lying on the ground next to the train, so I grabbed some blankets and ran into the back garden," he said.

"But I but couldn't climb over the concrete wall, so I just threw the blankets to the rescuers who were already gathering."

Belgian Prime Minister Yves Leterme canceled a trip to Kosovo, turning around his plane minutes after landing at Pristina's main airport, the Kosovo prime minister's office said.

Eurostar reported on its Web site that its high-speed trains had suspended service in and out of Brussels and could remain shut down all day.



The wreckage of two commuter trains is seen in Buizingen, Belgium Monday, Feb. 15, 2010. Two commuter trains collided head-on at rush hour in a Brussels suburb Monday, killing 20 people, Belgian officials said.

The international high-speed network Thalys, which links major cities in Belgium, France, Germany and the Netherlands, temporarily halted all traffic because its trains use the same rails as commuter lines near Hal, said Patricia Baars, a company spokeswoman.

At least four Thalys trains were stopped en route, and the railway operator deployed staffers to stations where they were rerouted to provide assistance to travelers on board, she said. "No (Thalys) train is moving for the moment ... it's very hard to know today when

services will resume," she said. "It appears this was a very severe accident." Thalys has at least 25 round-trip trains operating between Paris and Brussels each day, plus seven linking Brussels and Amsterdam and six from Belgium to Cologne, Germany. □

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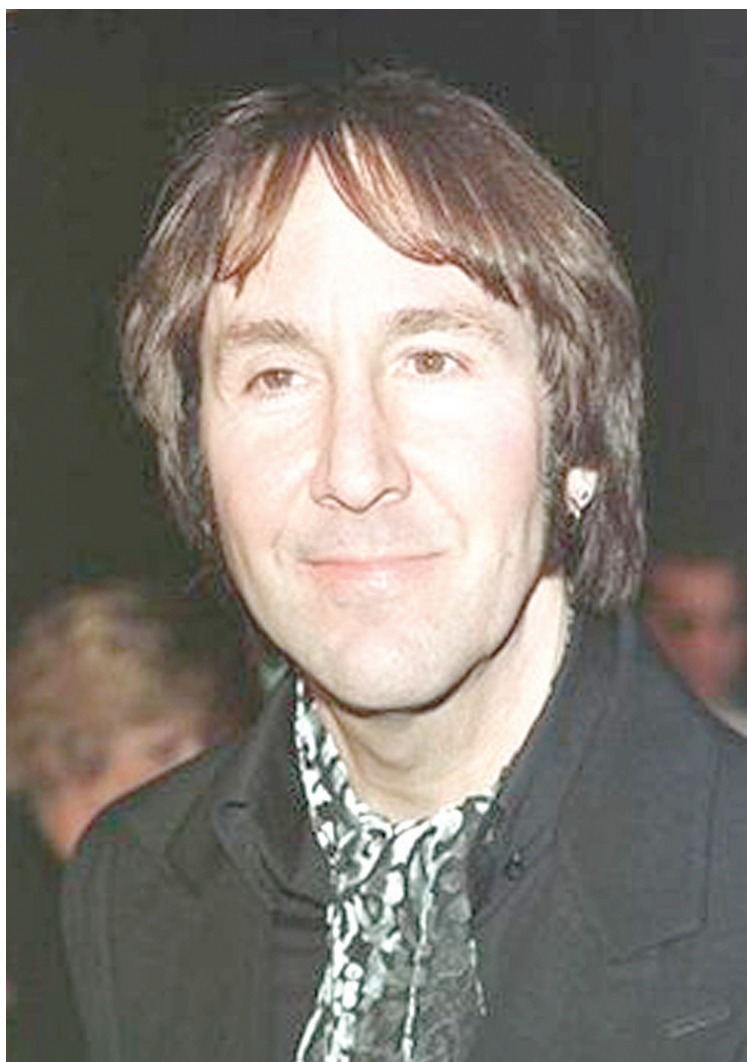
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Doug Fieger, a member of the rock group The Knack, arrives as a guest for the premiere of the new film "Still Crazy," January 20 in Los Angeles.

The Knack lead singer Doug Fieger dies

WOODLAND HILLS, Calif. – Doug Fieger, leader of the power pop band The Knack who sang on the 1979 hit "My Sharona," died Sunday. He was 57.

Fieger, a Detroit-area native, died at his home in Woodland Hills near Los Angeles after battling cancer, according to The Knack's manager, Jake Hooker.

Fieger formed The Knack in Los Angeles 1978, and the group quickly became a staple of Sunset Strip rock clubs. A year later he co-wrote and sang lead vocals on "My Sharona."

Fieger said the song, with its pounding drums and exuberant vocals, was inspired by a girlfriend of four years.

"I had never met a girl like her — ever," he told The Associated Press in a 1994 interview. "She induced madness. She was a very powerful presence. She had an insouciance that wouldn't quit. She was very self-assured. ... She also had an overpowering scent, and it drove me crazy."

"My Sharona," an unapologetically anthemic rock song, emerged during disco's heyday and held the No. 1 spot on the Billboard pop chart for six weeks, becoming an FM radio

standard.

It became a pop culture phenomenon, parodied by Weird Al Yankovic and others and sampled by rap group Run DMC.

In 1994, "My Sharona" re-entered the Billboard chart when it was released as a single from the soundtrack of the Ben Stiller film "Reality Bites." "My Sharona" gained attention again in 2005 when it was reported that George W. Bush had the song on the presidential iPod.

Their songs, about young love and teenage lust, included the hits "Good Girls Don't," "She's So Selfish" and "Frustrated."

The Knack continued to release albums and tour through the mid-2000s but they never replicated the success they enjoyed with their first two albums, "Get the Knack" and "... But the Little Girls Understand."

Fieger battled cancer for six years. In 2006 he underwent surgery to remove two tumors from his brain.

He is survived by a sister, Beth Falkenstein, and a brother, attorney Geoffrey Fieger of Southfield, Mich., who is best known for representing assisted suicide advocate Jack Kevorkian. □

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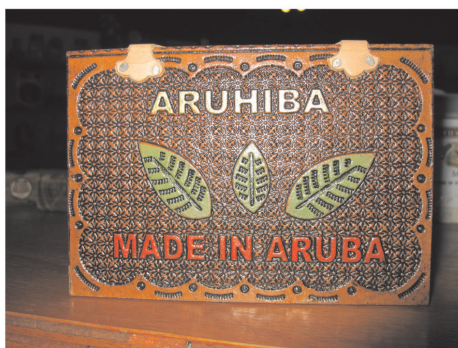
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Euro drops as EU ministers discuss Greece

LONDON (AFP) – The euro fell against the dollar on Monday as ministers met in Brussels for keenly-awaited talks on what to do about Greece's debt troubles and the eurozone's worst financial crisis. The euro fell to 1.3607 dollars in late trading in London from 1.3629 dollars late in New York on Friday. The European single currency also dropped against the Japanese unit to 122.45 yen from 122.61 yen late Friday. The dollar was stable at 89.98 yen from 89.96 yen previously. "The market is awaiting the outcome of how the finance

ministers plan to deal with the problem that is Greece and its debt," said Michael Hewson, an analyst at London-based financial spread-betting firm CMC Markets.

Ministers from the 16-nation euro area were meeting on Monday, while the finance ministers from the full 27-member European Union are set to gather on Tuesday after weeks of severe market turbulence for the eurozone. The talks are expected to raise the prospect of support for Greece and stress the need for greater budgetary discipline in the face of concern that Greece's debt troubles and

rising risk premiums threaten the eurozone as a whole.

"The euro has taken a beating over the past couple of weeks over the wrangling with Greece," said Phil McHugh, a dealer at Currencies Direct.

"Ministers need to tread carefully or risk further fear in the markets and selling of the euro," he added.

Hideaki Inoue, chief forex trader at Mitsubishi UFJ Trust and Banking Corp. in Tokyo, said: "Credit fears in Europe are still the biggest concern."

Analysts at Germany's Commerzbank said investors were hoping for concrete details on a possible bailout



The euro fell against the dollar on Monday as ministers met in Brussels for keenly-awaited talks on what to do about Greece's debt troubles and the eurozone's worst financial crisis.

(AFP/File/Philippe Desmazes)

Greek drama plays out on Wall Street

NEW YORK (Reuters) – U.S. stocks could struggle to make headway this week if a meeting of European finance ministers fails to reassure markets that they can contain Greece's debt problems. Greece's financing problems have focused investors' attention on the growing mountain of public debt as cash-strapped governments around the world spend their way out of recession. The fear is Greece's problems could spread, hurting financial markets.

Finance ministers from the euro zone will meet on Monday, when U.S. markets are closed for the Presidents Day holiday, followed by finance ministers from the rest of the European Union on Tuesday.

"What the market wants to hear is that there is a viable remedy," said Quincy Krosby, a market strategist with Prudential Financial in Newark, New Jersey.

"The market will be anticipating how other problems will be handled. Can the solution be applied to the problems that may crop



Copies of the New York Times paper sit in a rack in New York. The New York Times is conducting an investigation after a Wall Street and finance reporter was found to have improperly used wording and passages from other news organizations.

(AFP/Getty Images/File/Mario Tama)

up in Spain, Portugal, Italy (and Ireland) because traders believe the aftershocks are not over."

While international headlines continue to grab investors' attention, the plight of the U.S. economy has taken a back seat. That may change during the week with a government report on housing starts as well as the latest industrial output figures on Wednesday. For last week the Dow industrials (.DJI) and the S&P 500 rose 0.9 percent, while Nasdaq (.IXIC) added

2 percent. Still, the broad-based S&P 500 is now down 6.5 percent since hitting a 15-month closing high on January 19. Some U.S. investors have been comparing Greece's debt woes to the bankruptcy of U.S. investment bank Lehman Brothers, which sent markets into a tail spin in September 2008.

European government sources have been sending mixed signals to markets, suggesting a lack of consensus about how to prevent Greece's debt problems from ballooning. □

of Greece but said this was unlikely.

"Uncertainty about this issue is therefore likely to continue putting pressure on the euro this week," they said in a research note.

The euro on Friday fell to 1.3532 dollars -- its lowest level in almost nine months -- and investor jitters were aggravated by new economic growth data that showed the eurozone's recovery stalling in the fourth quarter of 2009. The heavyweight German economy ground to a halt in the fourth quarter and Italy slumped back into contraction, while growth in the 16-nation bloc rose a meager 0.1 percent in the final quarter from the previous three months.

Markets also focused on an announcement by the People's Bank of China that it would raise the deposit reserve ratio for banks by 50 basis points as of February 25, the second increase since the start of the year.

The hike in the ratio -- the minimum amount of money that banks must keep in reserve and not use for lending or other purposes -- was seen as the latest sign that Beijing is moving to prevent its economy overheating.

The move prompted investors to buy the safe-haven dollar, dealers said.

Japan announced that its economy grew 1.1 percent in October-December from the previous quarter, for an annualised pace of 4.6 percent. For the whole of 2009, Japan stayed just ahead of China as the world's number two economy.

But the market impact of the Japanese data was muted, even though the latest quarterly performance was slightly better than expected.

Asian trade was thin with many markets in the region closed for the Lunar New Year, and US markets shut for a national holiday.

In London on Monday, the euro was changing hands at 1.3607 dollars against 1.3629 dollars late on Friday, at 122.45 yen (122.61), 0.8686 pounds (0.8680) and 1.4658 Swiss francs (1.4658).

The dollar stood at 89.98 yen (89.96) and 1.0772 Swiss francs (1.0757).

The pound was at 1.5665 dollars (1.5699).

On the London Bullion Market, the price of gold rose to 1,098.25 dollars an ounce from 1,082 dollars an ounce late on Friday. □

SPORTS

Aruba TODAY



Defago restores downhill gold to Switzerland

ANDREW DAMPF

AP Sports Writer

WHISTLER, British Columbia (AP) — Didier Defago gave Switzerland its first gold medal in the Olympic downhill since Pirmin Zurbriggen achieved the feat on Canadian snow 22 years ago.

Defago sped down the Dave Murray course in 1 minute, 54.31 seconds Monday to match Zurbriggen's feat at the 1988 Calgary Games.

While pre-race favorite Didier Cuche was still to ski, Defago was already aware he had laid down a special run and nearly fell over backward into the padding lining the finish area as he celebrated with both arms in the air.

"He just nailed it right there. He didn't have an easy year because of the other guys who were taking the glory all the



Switzerland's Didier Defago, the gold medalist, is flanked at left by Norway's Aksel Lund Svindal, silver, and at right by Bode Miller of the United States, bronze, during the flower ceremony for the Men's downhill at the Vancouver 2010 Olympics in Whistler, British Columbia, Monday, Feb. 15, 2010.

Associated Press

Continued on Page 15



Kansas coach Bill Self receives a ball for his 400th career win following an NCAA college basketball game against Iowa State Saturday, Feb. 13, 2010, in Lawrence, Kan. Kansas won 73-59.

Associated Press

By JIM O'CONNELL

AP Basketball Writer

Chris Mooney and the Richmond Spiders set a bunch of goals before the season, including an Atlantic 10 regular-season title and their first NCAA tournament bid in six years.

After two road victories last week moved the Spiders into first place in the conference, they accomplished another

goal Monday: making the Top 25 for the first time in 24 years.

"It's really a significant accomplishment, and we've been very open with our guys about this, that it was something that we wanted to accomplish," said Mooney, in his fifth season in charge. "It's not going to help us beat Fordham, but it's certainly going to make us feel really

Richmond in AP Top 25 for first time in 24 years

good and understand we've been recognized in a really, really elite category."

In a week when Kansas State climbed to No. 7, its highest ranking in nearly five decades, the Spiders joined the AP poll at No. 25 for the first time since January 1986. It's just the fourth time in school history that the small, private school has been in the poll.

The Spiders (20-6, 9-2) host Fordham (2-21, 0-11) on Wednesday night, trying to stretch their winning streak to seven. Last week, they used a late 9-1 run to hand Rhode Island just its fourth loss, 69-67, and then rolled at St. Bonaventure, 68-49.

Mooney doesn't expect the Spiders' new status to be a problem.

"We'll see if it changes anything," he said Monday.

"We didn't want to hide from it. We wanted to seek it, and I know that ultimately it doesn't mean you've accomplished your other goals. It doesn't give you the championship of the A-10, or it doesn't give you an NCAA tournament berth, but it does mean something." Richmond, whose winning streak includes a 71-54 victory over Temple, was also ranked for three weeks in 1954-55, two weeks in 1957-58 and the one-week stint in January 1986.

Its success last week stood in contrast to four of the top 10 teams losing.

Kansas (24-1) was again a runaway No. 1, receiving 62 first-place votes from the 65-member national media panel to hold the top spot for the third week in a row. Kentucky (24-1), which had the other

No. 1 nods, moved up one spot to No. 2.

Villanova moved up one place to No. 3, with Purdue gaining two places to fourth, the sixth week this season the Boilermakers have reached that spot.

Syracuse, which had its 11-game winning streak stopped by Louisville on Sunday, dropped from second to fifth. Duke strengthened its lead in the Atlantic Coast Conference with a win over Maryland on Saturday and jumped from eighth to sixth.

Kansas State (20-4) achieved its highest ranking since it was sixth in the final poll of the 1961-62 season. West Virginia, which lost to Villanova and Pitt last week, fell to No. 8, followed by Ohio State and Georgetown, an upset victim of Rutgers on Sunday. □

NHL Roundup

Predators beat Pens 4-3 in SO; Crosby hit by shot

PITTSBURGH (AP) — Cal O'Reilly and Martin Erat scored in the shootout as the Nashville Predators beat the Pittsburgh Penguins 4-3 on Sunday — a game in which Penguins and Team Canada star Sidney Crosby was seen wincing shortly after blocking a shot. Crosby, who tied Alex Ovechkin for the NHL lead with his 42nd goal of the season and also added an assist, appeared frustrated and in pain on the bench after an apparent injury to his right leg moments after he blocked a shot with his shin. The shot came about seven minutes into the second period. Crosby said he was fine and was traveling to Vancouver on Sunday night. Although he appeared tentative during his first shift after the shot, by the end of the game the 22-year-old center showed no visible signs the foot was hindering him.

At Edmonton, Alberta, Ryan Getzlaf made a strong case to keep his spot with the Canadian national team, scoring twice and adding two assists in his first game back from a sprained left ankle to help Anaheim beat Edmonton.

Saku Koivu, Corey Perry, Scott Niedermayer, George Parros and Bobby Ryan also scored for Anaheim, which trails Calgary by two points for the final playoff spot in the Western Conference as the NHL heads into the Olympic break.

Ryan Potulny, Ethan Moreau and Lubomir Visnovsky scored for the NHL-worst Oilers.

At St. Paul, Minnesota, Niklas Backstrom got his first win in three weeks as Minnesota scored three power-play goals against Roberto Luongo, sending him to the bench early.

Cal Clutterbuck's shot off an uncovered rebound in the slot with 11:56 remaining slipped past Luongo for a 5-1 lead, prompting coach Alain

Vigneault to summon backup goalie Andrew Raycroft to finish up.

Defenseman Cam Barker made his Minnesota debut and scored on a late slap shot. The third overall pick in the 2004 draft, Barker was acquired from the Chicago Blackhawks

in a trade on Friday.

In other NHL games it was, Nashville 4, Pittsburgh 3, SO; Chicago 5, Columbus 4, SO; N.Y. Rangers 5, Tampa Bay 2; Minnesota 6, Vancouver 2; Ottawa 4, N.Y. Islanders 3; Anaheim 7, Edmonton 3. □



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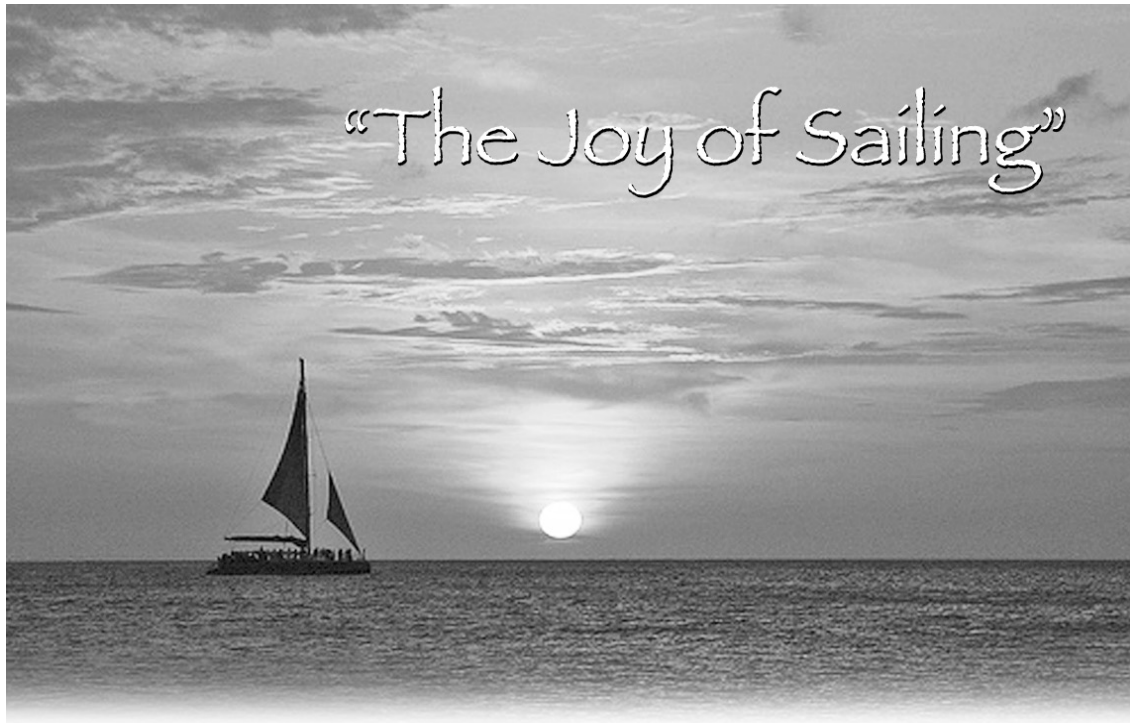
BRIAN MAHONEY
AP Basketball Writer
ARLINGTON, Texas (AP) — The largest crowd to watch a basketball game saw an all too familiar sight — Dwayne

Wade dominating a big game in Texas — as the Eastern Conference beat the West 141-139 in Sunday's NBA All-Star Game. Wade had 28 points and

won MVP honors in a game watched by 108,713 at Cowboys Stadium. Chris Bosh made the winning free throws for the East with five seconds left. The West had a chance to win it, but Carmelo Anthony's 3-point attempt came up short. "To be in front of 108,000 fans, that was actually what it was, that was not a false number. You could look up in the stands, and there was not a seat open," LeBron James said. "To be part of history is something that you always wish and dream for." The largest cheer of the night came earlier, when Mavericks owner Mark Cuban and Cowboys owner Jerry Jones came onto the court to announce the record crowd, which was also the largest in the \$1.2 billion building's short history.

They were booing at the end when Wade went to the line and made two free throws with 12.7 seconds left. Dirk Nowitzki of the hometown Mavericks tied it with two of his own five seconds later before Bosh put the East on top for the final time. James had 25 points, and Bosh finished with 23 points and 10 rebounds for the East. For the West, Anthony scored 27 and Nowitzki had 22. Wade's performance brought back memories of his MVP performance when Miami won the title in Dallas. "I've had a little luck in Dallas. Of course, 2006 is very, very memorable, something I dreamed of doing for a long time, winning the NBA championship and I was lucky enough and blessed enough to win the MVP there," Wade said. "To come and do it again is special." He shot 12 of 16 from the field and also had five steals. The real star, though, was the venue. The NBA brought its midseason showcase to a football stadium, and the arrangement worked perfectly. The league was predicting about 90,000 but ended up blowing past Jones' and Cuban's hopes to pass 100,000. It easily shattered the previous record for the largest crowd to watch a basketball game of 78,129, set for a college match between Kentucky and

Michigan State at Detroit's Ford Field in 2003. And the thrilling finish more than salvaged an occasionally rough All-Star weekend for the league. Injuries knocked out fan favorites such as Kobe Bryant and Chris Paul. Commissioner David Stern and players association executive director Billy Hunter indicated the sides are far apart on a new labor agreement that would prevent a work stoppage in the summer of 2011, and the slam dunk contest wasn't pretty even with the presence of the Dallas Cowboys cheerleaders. Players came out to the court — which appeared much smaller than 94 feet from the highest levels of the venue — more than an hour before the game to check out the scene and the challenges it could create. Having hundreds of feet behind the baskets had some All-Stars wondering if their depth perception could be thrown off while shooting. "Usually in All-Star games, not everybody is going out to shoot and warm up, but if you looked an hour before the game, both teams, all players were almost out there shooting, because it's so different in a huge dome with the background," Nowitzki said. "And for the size of this arena, both teams were shooting pretty well." □



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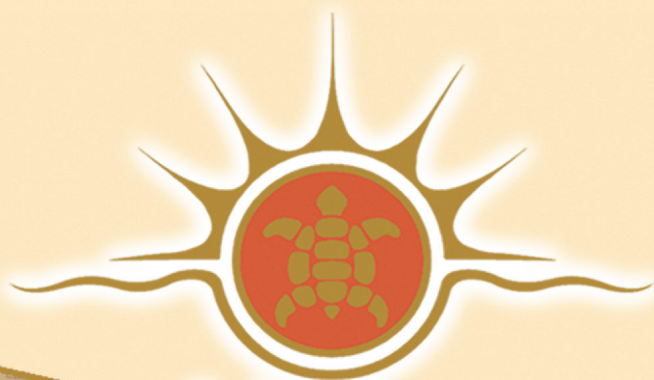
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DOWNHILL GOLD

Continued from Page 12

At 32 years and 4 months, Defago became the oldest man to win the Olympic downhill, beating the previous record established by Jean-Luc Cretier, the Frenchman who was 32 years and 1 month when he won at the 1998 Nagano Games.

Mario Scheiber of Austria finished fourth, local favorite Erik Guay of Canada placed fifth and Cuche came sixth.

Two other Canadians with high hopes struggled. Manuel Osborne-Paradis was even with Svindal before he got a little wild midway down and lost a big chunk of time, while Robbie Dixon — who has a house in Whistler, fell on the bottom but appeared uninjured. Miller won two silvers at the 2002 Salt Lake City Games and a full load of world championship medals before he went bust in Turin four years ago, making more headlines for his late-night partying than his skiing. Miller also failed to win a medal at the 2007 and 2009 world championships and considered retiring over the offseason before the Olympics lured him back for one more shot at redeeming himself.

Miller was the eighth starter and set the pace for the other race favorites, who started between 16 and 22.

The American started his run

a little earlier than planned because the previous skier, Andrej Sporn of Slovenia, missed an early gate.

Rocking back and forth as a team member psyched him up with screams and yells in the starting house, Miller began his run solidly, tucking at every opportunity on the upper gliding sections.

Miller was nearly a full second — 0.97 to be exact — faster than the previous leader, David Poisson of France, at the second checkpoint. Always one of the most exciting skiers to watch, Miller flailed his arms out to maintain his balance on the turns and jumps, drawing

Switzerland's Didier Defago approaches the finish line to win gold in the Men's downhill at the Vancouver 2010 Olympics in Whistler, British Columbia, Monday, Feb. 15, 2010.

Associated Press

“Oohs” and “Ahhs” from the crowd, but pulled himself back into his aerodynamic tuck for the straightaways. Perhaps still not 100 percent physically after skipping offseason training while he debated his future, Miller lost nearly half a second on the bottom of the course, and appeared on the verge of exhaustion as he had a bit of a tough time landing the final jump leading into the finish line. □



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Aqua Grill... "the hip restaurant that is heaven on earth for seafood lovers," Fodor's Travel Guide



Among the island's many fine restaurants, Aqua Grill is the premier seafood sensation. Excitingly prepared in an open-view kitchen, fresh local catches join delicacies from waters abroad, including live Maine lobster, Norwegian salmon, sashimi tuna, and Alaskan king crab, along with a selection of non-seafood dishes.

Aqua Grill's award-winning chef offers a menu of classic and contemporary dishes. The fresh

seafood is prepared in a variety of regional styles, melding local island charm with the traditions of New England, the spices of Jamaica, the zesty flavors of Italy, the mystique of Indonesia, and beyond.

In addition to a selection of authentic dishes, your seafood can also be prepared wood-grilled, broiled, poached, steamed, or pan-fried upon request. Complementing the menu is the island's

largest raw bar and a generous wine list of over one hundred selections.

Set in a contemporary decor combining the traditions of a New England fish house with the ease and character of the Caribbean, Aqua Grill's warm, island hospitality is the final ingredient to the complete dining experience on Aruba.

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Catch your own dinner with Driftwood! Motto at Driftwood Restaurant: "From the pier to your plate!"

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"fresh seafood" really mean. What Herby catches will be served in his restaurant on

the same day. Herby loves to share his fishing passion with the many visitors to the island. His fleet of a 35 ft. Twin Engine Bertram yacht and a 50 ft. Twin Engine Post yacht, appropriately called "Driftwood I and II, is available for charters on a daily basis from 8am to

Catch your own dinner

12 noon and from 1pm to 5pm. A charter includes: captain, mate, all fishing equipment, bait, sodas and bottled water. On a full day charter sandwiches and snacks are also included. You can call Herby directly at (297) 592 4040 or go to www.driftwoodaruba.com.

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Rates per boat

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Driftwood Restaurant

This authentic Aruban seafood restaurant is located in characteristic downtown Oranjestad. Their extended

menu has been jubled by many. Driftwood offers daily specials, as well as a delicious 3-course menu for just \$24.

Driftwood Restaurant

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Tio Acram delivers a group of Brazilian VIPS to the Radisson



PALM BEACH – Travel professional Acram Ispcr, fondly known as Tio Acram, delivered his second group of Brazilian VIPS to the Radisson Aruba Resort Casino & Spa, flying in from Manaus the capital of the state of Amazonas, via an Air Surinam charter. The group gave up Carnival in Brazil in honor of celebrating Carnival in Aruba. The Acram Travel group was warmly greeted by General Manager Rob Smith and by Vicky Perez of the Sales Department, in the resort open air lobby.

Immediately following their check-in the group enjoyed a cocktail party at Mira Solo Martini Bar. Among dignitaries on the trip Carlos Eduardo Braga a Brazilian politician and businessman currently the governor of the state of Amazonas.□



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Aruba welcomes two special Good Will Ambassadors

Andrea & Paul return to Aruba

NOORD -One of many favorite moderator's on Aruba.com were in Aruba recently to enjoy sun, relaxation and all that Aruba has to offer. Aruba Today's tribute today is for Andrea James and her husband Paul. This wonderful couple has been coming to Aruba since the early 90's. Andrea's first visit was in 1979 during a pre and post Bonaire scuba trip with friends before she had met her husband. She fell in love with Aruba the moment she set foot on the island. "My fondest moments back then were the vendors selling fruit and little hand made dolls right there on the tarmac", stated Andrea. They started visiting Aruba with their son and stopped



numerous times on cruises in the late 80's and 90's and bought their first timeshare at LaCabana in 1998. They have accumulated 10 weeks of LaCabana timeshares, converted them to Bluegreen points and now they have more annual points than brains. Their son now 24, married and a gainfully employed nuclear engineer for the department of defense honeymooned on Aruba in December 2009 and he and his bride were HOOKED on Aruba. Andrea is a moderator on the online community forum of aruba.com and is well known for her opinions to tourists from all over the world. The tourists exchange ideas openly and give and receive travel

information about Aruba in many categories. Throughout the years Andrea & Paul have met numerous Arubans and other folks from all over the world thru the aruba.com and cherish this special friendship. Many of the members on aruba.com live vicariously through other folks' trip to Aruba. Our goal is "we love helping, we love listening, we love having friends from all over the world and best of all we love coming to Aruba and meeting up with our online friends. Andrea & Paul enjoyed their two week vacation of relaxing and meeting up with forum members at Amsterdam Manor's Happy hour every Monday. "It is always exciting

to see new faces", stated Andrea who added "Aruba will always be my home away from home and my One Happy Island."

In the picture, Andrea & Paul are enjoying one of their favorite restaurants 'Buccaneer' with over 30 years of existence. Their friends enjoyed their dining experience with seafood and fresh catch entrees adjacent to the enormous 8, 500 galloon tanks filled with Aruba's sea friends. Buccaneer and Aruba Today wish you a Happy Valentine's Day and thank you for your hard work and invigorating comments on the <http://aruba.com> forum.

Photo by Angela Munzenhofer

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School Vacation Kids Love Aruba



PALM BEACH - Bitter cold temperatures in the Northeast resulted in hundreds of families packing up their suitcases during School Vacation Week, and heading south to the sunny Island of Aruba to enjoy ideal weather conditions superb for sunning, sailing and sand castles.

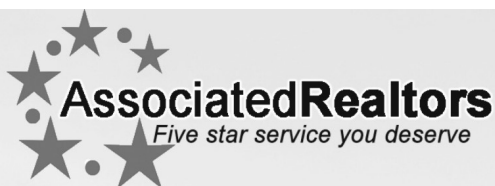
With guaranteed sunshine and a myriad of activities to choose from and miles of beautiful beaches to enjoy them on, Aruba is a number one choice. With expert instruction, given over at the Fisherman Huts, just north of the Marriott Resorts, we noticed several

parents enjoying a sunny day while their children learned to windsurf with Wim at Aruba Active Vacations. "It's easier than you think", explains one of the youngsters! For more information about Windsurfing, Kite Surfing and Mountain Bike Tours you can call Wim at 741 - 2991.



School children of all ages can be seen playing along the stretch of Aruba's Palm Beach all week. With plenty of white sand for castle building, the island's tastiest nuggets and cheeseburgers by the dozens, the staff at MooMba Beach are keeping families smiling at their kid - friendly beachfront restaurant. Offering super snorkeling for beginners, at Boca Catalina, children of all ages explored the sea under the watchful eyes of the crew aboard the Jolly

Pirates Schooners. Always with a ready hand to assist, just ask the Jolly Pirates crew what makes their ship kid - friendly and they will perform flips "literally" for you. When in search of a bountiful good time join the Jolly Pirates for a snorkel cruise and there will be no chance of a mutiny in sight. For more information about the Jolly Pirates visit their Pirate Souvenir Shop at the MooMba Beach located between the Marriott and Holiday Inn Resorts. □



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Ank Bijleveld

Brinkman wants UPB disqualified

THE HAGUE--Member of Dutch Parliament (MP) Hero Brinkman of the Party for Freedom PVV wants State Secretary of Kingdom Relations Ank Bijleveld-Schouten to retroactively disqualify Bonaire's former UPB Executive Council as a negotiation partner.

Brinkman stated this in response to a pamphlet that was released shortly before the January 22 Antillean Parliament elections. The pamphlet accused UPB leader Ramonsito Booi and other prominent party members of, among other things, fraud and corruption.



Hero Brinkman

Brinkman on Thursday sent a copy to Bijleveld-Schouten along with a few written questions. He asked whether there was any truth to the accusation that Booi,



Ramoncito Booi

James Kroon, Reginald Dortalina, Maritsa Silberie, Jeffrey Livingstone and Elvis Tjin-A-Tjoe were involved in drug trafficking, money laundering practices, fraud and corruption. The MP wanted to know if the State Secretary was willing to reverse the outcome of the constitutional negotiations and disqualify UPB as a negotiation partner if the accusations of criminal activities turned out to be true. □

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available to all lovers in the house. In honor of the day the chefs prepared a special three-course meal starring the restaurant's famed grilled Argentine tenderloin steak chased by an ever so delicious trio dessert of tiramisu, crepe with Dulce de Leche and mini flan. Even the coffee was served with chocolate heart bonbons! Located in the heart of town on Wilhelminastraat, El Gaucho restaurant has been serving marinated and perfectly charcoal grilled steaks and seafood for the past 33 years. Check out the website at www.elgaucho-aruba.com, for the updated menu or for a gift certificate, which you may print on line and present to friends and loved-ones, at any occasion. □



ORANJESTAD – Family members and friends celebrated Valentine's Day at Aruba's most popular Argentinean steakhouse. The restaurant went all out in honor of the day, decorating the bar and the tables with rose petals and making gorgeous fresh flowers



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HUMAN HINTS

You Define Your Future

We have concluded that our lives can be thought of as impulse forces, or focused concentrations of energy. That is half the equation necessary to define Human Life. We understand that energy is necessary for life, but raw energy is chaotic. There must be a force acting on the energy, organizing it for some purpose.

The force that acts on energy to create our lives is our Consciousness, our Thoughts. Our thoughts express themselves by

organizing random energy. Our mind and spirit use random energy to create the Hologram that our bodies interpret as our Lives.

Our mind and spirit interact to create the Hologram we call our lives. We each have our own individual hologram, as no two people see any given set of facts in the same way. Each hologram also shares common ground, the agreed-upon reality of Human Consciousness. All matter seems to be more or less agreed upon by everyone on

Earth. Our holograms must agree to some extent for us to be able to interact with each other. This common ground, common frequency, common harmonic, connects us all.

Our mind and spirit blend to create our lives, so our conscious mind must hold the power to influence the future of our lives.

Our spirit controls the main themes of our lives, and our decisions and reactions determine the details of the experience.

Our attitudes define the hologram, and since we have control over what is in our minds, we can consciously change the hologram into whatever we want. With patience and persistence, the three dimensional world will transform to reflect your attitudes and thoughts.

We each have the power to create the future life of our desires.

We can define life as we want it, and live by our own terms, which is why it is so important to be clear on what we want and what our terms are. You are a powerful being, so don't be ashamed to place real value

on what you have to offer, and consider your terms wisely.

Terms mean that you have to agree to give something in return for having the power to create your own life. What you give back can be anything you have of value, that makes you happy to give. When you connect and contribute to Humanity, you empower your self.

We can influence our holograms, and make life the way we want it. Your thoughts and emotions are your only limitations. Your Hologram has infinite organizing potential, so don't even consider how it is going to happen, no matter how far off and impossible your goal seems. How is up to Universal Synchronicity. Set your Intention and Enjoy the Ride!

Your job is to know that your life is as you define it, then strap in and experience the ride to your destination. Allow it to happen. Change your goal as you change, and you will always define the destination. Accept the changes and don't fight them as they come. As you focus on the future you want,

your life will change. The more easily you accept the changes as growth toward your goal, the easier your journey will be.

Go to www.HumanHints.com to sign up to receive this column in your email each day.

~**Quentin Danziger**

Quentin has over 20 years experience balancing what we refer to as the Real World, with science and spirit. He has held positions of responsibility and authority, received a Bachelor of Science in Engineering Physics from Colorado School of Mines, and has also studied many avenues of alternative thought.

HumanHints is the culmination of his knowledge, experience and practice. These free daily emails detail concrete, real-world techniques to consciously create any future you choose, while in the throes of daily life created by outdated modes of thought.

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PG	ALVIN AND THE CHIPMUNKS "THE SQUEAKQUEL"	daily: 4.00 matinee: 12.00	2.00	late show:	
PG	TOOTH FAIRY	daily: 4.45 matinee: 12.15	2.30	late show:	
PG-13	LA PASION DE GABRIEL	daily: 7.00 matinee:	9.00	late show: 11.00	
R	LEGION	daily: 7.00 matinee:	9.30	late show: 12.00	
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PG	PERCY JACKSON & THE OLYMPIANS	daily: 5.30 matinee: 12.00	8.15 2.45	late show: 11.00	NEW
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The French Steakhouse delivers dining under the stars



Eagle Beach – The French Steakhouse at the Manchebo Beach Resort & Spa just added another charming dining option, a tropical outdoor courtyard, featuring delicious cuisine under the stars. The famed French Steakhouse prides itself on the elegant dining experience it offers patrons in the fully air-conditioned dining room. Yet recently the idea of adding a garden spot to the existing blueprint began to sprout in the creative mind of Executive Chef George Hoek, and he immediately recruited the landscapers to create the

intimate, lovely setting. The French Steakhouse Ooh-La-La menu is now served indoor and alfresco, featuring creative appetizers, soups, salads, seafood dishes, poultry and the Pièce de Résistance South American & USDA Beef specialties. Among popular appetizers the chef's Tropical Crab Cakes with pineapple & mango salsa and the Teriyaki Glazed Seared Duck Breast, served with garden greens and balsamic dressing, are real crowd pleasers. True to the restaurant's French roots, the Onion Soup

is a classic, while the Honey Glazed Salmon Salad winks at the exotic East with a sweet soy dressing. The menu features a great variety of seafood dishes from fresh fish to the totally sinful and amazingly-decadent Caribbean Stuffed Shrimp with Crabmeat and Bacon, which became an instant hit. The tequila and sweet chili glaze, lends the Jumbo shrimp a pure taste of heaven!



The French Steakhouse is naturally famous for the South American Churrasco steak, a signature preparation, which now shares the stage with juicy USDA beef specialties such as NY Sirloin and Filet Mignon. Light-eaters will find the Jerk Chicken Skewers and the Lemon Herb Broilers very satisfying. Open seven days a week from 5:30 p.m. - 11:00 p.m. the French Steakhouse is blessed with the nicest staff and a delightfully renovated dining

room with sparkling China, crisp linen, an interesting bread basket, colossal desserts and live jazz on piano with Eddy Samson who is Aruba's best entertainer, and a walking & breathing music encyclopedia, just whistle the tune, and Eddy will produce a symphonic version of your favorite song. Hungry patrons will appreciate the Ambassador's 5-course menu featuring the run of the menu highlights for just \$34.95 per person. www.manchebo.com/steakhouse

Pega Pega Café & Beach Bar reinvents Beach Cuisine



Eagle Beach – Pega Pega Café & Beach Bar at the Manchebo Beach Resort & Spa is widely recognized as the home of Beach Cuisine. Executive Chef George Hoek and his culinary team serve a Sun Splashed menu on the ocean front terrace, raising the restaurant to a must-visit, must-try status.



The contemporary menu, lists many favorite dishes from around the world, borrowing inspiration from US, Mexican, Thai, Jamaican, Cuban, Greek and Mediterranean kitchens, all served with a tropical, Caribbean flair. From Sun-Sational Salads, to

Cuban pressed jawbreakers and wraps, mid-day platters also include oversize Beef Burgers, Philly Cheese Steak Sandwiches and Hot Dogs. The Pega Pega tropical & frozen cocktail list, with fresh fruit or ice cream smoothies, daiquiris, coladas and margaritas, leaves nothing out, including Yellow Birds, Sex on the Beach and Mudslides, making a lunch-time brain-freeze, extremely easy to get! The Pega Pega, one of Aruba oldest beach bars is open on fabulous Eagle Beach, with unrivaled views, caring, gracious service, and relaxed atmosphere, from 12 noon to 5 p.m. The bar is open from 11 a.m. to 11 p.m.



Giorgio's Ristorante Italiano introduces Menu Turistico

Eagle Beach -- Giorgio's Ristorante Italiano located at the heart of the low-rise hotels at the Manchebo Beach Resort & Spa, delivers authentic Mediterranean flavors, at a reasonable price.

The restaurant has just introduced Menu Turistico a three-course dinner featuring appetizers, main courses and desserts for just \$19.95, per person, plus 15% service charge. Patrons may choose between home made soup and Caesar salad, Fettuccini Alfredo, Lasagna Casarecia, Spaghetti alla Bolognese or any favorite pizza with Tiramisu, Cheese Cake or Ice Cream for the sweet finale.

Executive Chef George Hoek is the resort's much-appreciated culinary expert. He was the recent recipient of a Lifetime Achievement Award, presented by the Aruba Hotel & Tourism Association in collaboration with the Digicel Group. Chef George accepted the Shoco Award, the national award of excellence, and Aruba's top professional decoration, in the tourism industry. □



American Airlines To Begin Flights Into Haiti



By Mike Mitchell

Port Au Prince International Airport (PAP) will resume commercial flights as soon as February 18, 2010. American Airlines will resume flights to

Port Au Prince, Haiti as soon as Thursday. There will remain flight restrictions in and out of Port Au Prince due to the conditions at the airport. The main terminal building while

still standing, has cracks all throughout and cannot be used. This will be the first time that scheduled flights have been allowed back into earthquake-ravaged country Haiti. Back on February 2nd the military had begun to allow small jet charters into the country.

At that time Port Au Prince International Airport had established "air traffic flow management procedures" that allowed for fixed-wing aircraft to land at Port Au Prince, once they received an arrival slot time from the Haiti

Flight Operations Coordination Center. All arriving flights had a 20-minute window to land and required to be on an active IFR flight plan prior to departure. Back in mid January American Airlines had reported that it impose a 30 day bag embargo on all excess, oversize, and overweight baggage on flights to Santo Domingo, Santiago and Puerto Plata in the Dominican Republic. This embargo would also apply to Port-au-Prince, Haiti, when service resumes there. American Airlines now reports that passengers may carry a total of five bags, two

onboard and three in the belly of the aircraft. However, your third bag and there on will cost you \$50 per bag if under 50 pounds.

The 7.0 magnitude earthquake that devastated Haiti January 12, 2010, severely damaged the airport's air control facility, rendering it inoperable. The government of Haiti requested U.S. government to help with a solution.

In response, the FAA produced a mobile control tower used for relief efforts following Hurricane Katrina in 2005, said to Angus Wall, the FAA Miami Technical Support Center manager. The mobile control tower will be used until a permanent facility can be rebuilt, according to FAA officials. Haiti's air traffic control will resume its normal operating hours from 6 AM to 3 PM to 6 AM to 10 p.m.

At the present time American Airlines will be the only air carrier to operate from the United States to Haiti. Delta Airlines has not given a time to begin services into Haiti.

On Monday, February 15, Insel Air's Port-au-Prince ticket office reopened at 9 AM. Insel Air continues to work with the Haitian government and airport authorities to resume commercial operations as soon as possible. InselAir operates two (2) aircrafts of the MD-80- series and two (2) of the Embraer-Bandeirante 110-series and flies to the following destinations: Curacao, Aruba, Bonaire, St. Maarten, Santo Domingo, Haiti, Puerto Rico, Miami, Surinam, Valencia and Las Piedras

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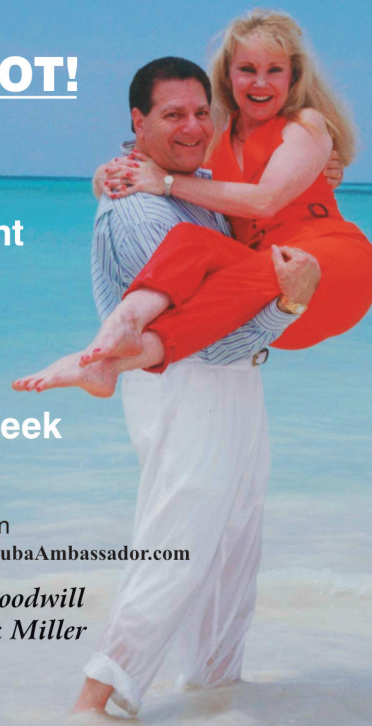
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'MagicLive!...is Hip-Comedy Entertainment, Adam is the ultimate Modern Magician' - Jacque Polak, CBS-TV. Steinfeld sophisticated card-sharp street magic, mixed with grand theater illusions is a visual feast...this will be the highlight of your vacation. -Al Blanchard, mystery novelist, Boston, MA.

Steinfeld's, comedy magician, likable on-stage personality, comic interactive-wit, and amazing magic, mixed with his dream-like theatre-of-

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Tickets: at the door
Price: \$19.95 under 15, \$29.5 adults
Group Sales: 561-1090
website: www.MagicLive.com
Blog: www.MagicOnTheBeach.com

The Coconut Trading Co., is Stocked with Gorgeous Gifts



Palm Beach -- The Coconut Trading Company displays gifts personally selected by owner Jodi Tobman, a Boston native and longtime Aruba resident, and you are invited to discover extraordinary

treasures handcrafted by skilled artisans and colorfully displayed in a beach house ambiance in the lobby of the Marriott Ocean Club, and at a second just-opened location at the Village Mall on Palm

Beach.

Every corner of the store attracts the eye with a dazzling assortment of gifts and home accents that command attention; strikingly designed photo frames, candle holders and snuffers, serving pieces to dress every picnic table up and dazzling glass accents: a virtual potpourri of tropical and distinctive gifts to grace any home.

The stores also stock a fine selection of creative sterling jewelry, handcrafted with precious gems, sea glass, turquoise and fresh water pearls, which can be found



artfully arranged, beckoning to be worn. Find extraordinary gifts for all your family members and friends, there's something for everyone on your list, not to forget yourself!

Popular with repeat visitors and locals, The Coconut Trading Co. has become the premier stop for the perfect gift, with great prices and convenient nighttime shopping hours. Shipping is available,

for larger pieces, offered with a drop ship program at a nominal fee.

The Coconut Trading Co., located in the Marriott Ocean Club lobby. Open daily from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m., Sundays until 7 p.m. The Coconut Trading Company, located at the Village Mall on Palm Beach. Open daily from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m., seven days a week. Email: orders@salamanderholdings.com

Fine & Affordable Dining at Pam Pam Restaurant

Meet Chef Ludwich Samson and his exquisite menu now unveiled!



Nestled in the quiet neighborhood of Boegoeroei, Perle d'Or apartment complex houses Dutch students and vacationers, as well as a cozy garden eatery, Pam Pam Restaurant & Bar. Aiming to attract a more diverse clientele, Pam Pam has recently adopted a more upscale dining concept. In order to pilot this new concept, rising local chef Ludwich Samson was brought on board, and in just two months on the job, he has

more than proven his worth.

Laid-back, refreshingly young, and ambitious, Ludwich began his career as a chef by enrolling in Aruba's hospitality and culinary arts school—the best decision he has ever made, he wholeheartedly claims. With ten years in the kitchen and three years as a chef, Ludwich has developed an impressive arsenal of cooking skills. He attributes the majority of his growth as a chef to his years

of working under his mentor, Vittorio Muscarllo, owner of Hostaria Da'Vittorio and one of the most highly respected chefs on Aruba.

In his two months with Pam Pam, Ludwich has entirely remodeled the kitchen to make it more efficient. He has also created a whole new menu featuring particularly unique dishes in order to distinguish Pam Pam from the endless number of restaurants along Aruba's hotel strip. While the menu still offers Dutch snacks and typical Dutch platters like sate to appease the many Dutch interns residing at Perle d'Or, the rest of the menu offers upscale fusion cuisine. Lemon grass and chillies give several seafood dishes a Thai flair; homemade ravioli and beef carpaccio salute Italy; crustacean ceviche adds a Peruvian element; and Indonesian spices add zest to a handful of casual main dishes.

Ludwich also craftily adds little unexpected twists to some classic dishes, elevating the uniqueness of his menu. One of his personal favorites is his porcini-crusted filet mignon served with a thyme red-wine reduction. He also delights in the fact that most diners have a hard time figuring out the sweet and spicy deliciousness of his signature crustacean platter. Other interesting interpretations include lump-crab lollipops, chicken cordon blue unorthodoxly stuffed with ricotta and bacon, and for dessert, tiramisu that promises an untraditional layer of decadent Bailey's chocolate mousse.

Needless to say, Ludwich is creative in the kitchen and works extremely hard, currently putting in 12 to 16 hours a day, seven days a week; but he insists that this is not what makes a good chef good. "I simply love what



I do for a living," confides Ludwich, and this is what guarantees success in the kitchen and contented diners. Of course, being a chef can be downright stressful, but Ludwich thrives on the rush of adrenaline on busy nights. And when he peers out of the kitchen and sees a restaurant full of people enjoying their meals, he experiences immense satisfaction. For reservations call: 5877710 or 7483848, or visit us at www.pampamaruba.com.

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Governor annuls referendum law

BONAIRE -- Antillean Governor Frits Goedgedrag has annulled Bonaire's Island Ordinance for a Constitutional Referendum on March 26 at the request of that island's Lt. Governor, as it is "in conflict with the Human Rights Treaty and the interest of the Dutch Kingdom." The Governor said his decision was in line with the advice of a United Nations (UN) delegation that visited Bonaire at the end of last year in connection with the referendum plans of the new ADB/Nicolaas (ex-UPB) coalition that had ousted the UPB Executive Council earlier that year.

Goedgedrag was of the opinion that allowing only Dutch citizens not born in the Netherlands Antilles, but residing on the island before 2007, to vote lacked objective justification. He used as an example the fact that someone who had been born in St. Maarten and had moved to Bonaire on February 1, 2010, would be able to participate, but someone who had been born in Aruba (which left the Netherlands Antilles in 1986) and had living in Bonaire since January 2, 2007, would not. In the Governor's view, this was an unreasonable restriction of voting rights.

He also agreed with Lt. Governor Glenn Thode that the question to be asked and options offered in the referendum, according to the ordinance passed in the Island Council by the ADB/Nicolaas majority despite protests from the UPB opposition, were unclear and in conflict with the general interest. They do not offer the population a "free and real choice" and, as a

result, justice is not done to the right of self-determination. Goedgedrag said the proposed referendum followed from the earlier referendum of September 10, 2004, in which the majority chose for direct ties with the Netherlands. "It would have been [the thing] to ask the people of Bonaire if the execution given to that result by the former Executive Council was in agreement with the choice made in 2004, as was, for example, done with the referendum in Curaçao." "With the now-determined question, there is a great risk that because of an unclear outcome of the referendum in Bonaire, the constitutional restructuring process for all islands would be seriously delayed. That would be unreasonably damaging to the interests of the other islands and the Kingdom partners," the Governor said in a release.

Jeffrey Richardson resigns from DP

~ Promised to serve from "another perspective" ~

PHILIPSBURG--Democratic Party (DP) number ten candidate in the January 22 Parliamentary Elections Jeffrey Richardson has resigned from the party.

Richardson's move comes on the heels of DP President Michael Ferrier's resignation; he had put his post at the party's disposal shortly after the Parliamentary Elections, but it was not accepted by DP leader Sarah Wescot-Williams.

Richardson, who had been with the DP for the past eight years as candidate in both the 2007 Island Elections and the 2010 Parliamentary Elections, said he had been working with people who did not have his best interest at heart.

He said his resignation would enable him to "better serve his people," which he promised to do "from another perspective." He plans to release details in a subsequent statement.

"In life [there] comes a point when you must take decisions in order for you to move forward and make room for being able to work in an atmosphere where you can better serve your people," Richardson said in a press release over the weekend.

"You need to feel a sort of comfort to decide to continue working with persons who you feel do not have your best interest [at heart], which is the case in this instance."

Richardson said, as a politician, he believed it was "fair and ethical" to inform the public of his move. He said he had informed the DP leadership of his resignation by letter.

"Running for public office is a public issue, and all major decisions that a politician takes should be transparent, by informing the population of

those decisions," he said.

"After giving this situation careful thought, this decision was taken, and I hope that it will be understood by all my supporters. There's an old saying that goes: 'Who's in the kitchen feels the heat.'"

He thanked the DP leadership and all the Commissioners he had assisted in office for the past 14 years for allowing him to "serve the people of St. Maarten, which today I am proud of having done."

"Being a part of the Democratic Party was the right thing to do at the time I served as a member. However, I believe that it is imperative for me to move on. However, I will still serve the people of St. Maarten from another perspective, which I will make public in a subsequent press release." Richardson had also worked as a support staff member for two DP Commissioners, which he said he had enjoyed.

"It was an honour to do so because I had the opportunity to serve the people of St. Maarten by assisting those Commissioners with their daily tasks. Having done that, I was able to experience the way Government functions. This allowed me to better serve the public with the experience that I gained," he said, adding that he had been able to obtain a Bachelor's Degree in Public Administration. He had been a DP board member in the past also.

He thanked the 58 persons who had placed their confidence in him during the Parliamentary Elections as well as his campaign team, financial supporters and family for their relentless support.



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STU	WK 8/9	ROOM 133	P.V.	\$ 10.000 PW	
2BR	WK 11	ROOM 46/49	P.V.	\$ 17.000	
STU	WK 9	ROOM 123	P.O.	\$ 7.000	
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Polis 100
Brandweer 115
Brandweer II 582-1108
Tipline di Polis 11141
Hospital 587-4300

Oranjestad

Ambulance 582-1234
Warda Polis 582-4000
BGD Oranjestad 582-8877

San Nicolas

Ambulance 584-5050
Warda Polis 584-5000
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Alcalde capital Perú mantiene liderazgo comicio 2011



Imagen de archivo del alcalde de la capital de Perú, Luis Castañeda. REUTERS/Alejandro Acosta/archivo

Colombia dispuesta a vender energía a Venezuela

BOGOTA (AP) - Colombia está dispuesta a venderle energía a Venezuela pero su gobierno aclaró que no ha recibido ninguna petición para ayudar a paliar la crisis energética que enfrenta ese país desde hace varios meses.

El ministro de Minas y Energía, Hernán Martínez, agregó que desde hace unos tres meses Venezuela dejó de comprarle energía a Colombia "porque le salía muy costosa", pero advirtió que como consecuencia de que "dejamos de exportar energía a Ecuador, porque sus represas se han ido llenando... tenemos un sobrante pequeño de energía que podríamos venderle".

El ministro venezolano de Energía Eléctrica Alí Rodríguez indicó a la prensa que la posibilidad de comprar energía a su vecino "depende de la situación que ustedes conocen muy bien de la relaciones entre Colombia y Venezuela".

El presidente venezolano Hugo Chávez decretó el 8 de febrero un estado de emergencia eléctrica para agilizar las

adquisiciones de nuevos equipos en medio de la crisis por la sequía de la represa del Guri, que es la mayor generadora de electricidad del país, y las deficiencias del sistema termoelectrico. En julio de 2009, Chávez declaró "congeladas" las relaciones políticas y económicas con Colombia, molesto por un acuerdo de cooperación militar entre Washington y Bogotá, así como por señalamientos colombianos en torno a que el gobierno de Caracas

habría facilitado lanzacohetes antitanque AT-4, de fabricación sueca adquiridos en la década de 1980, a las rebeldes Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC).

La decisión de Chávez ha provocado una baja de las exportaciones colombianas a Venezuela, de unos 6.000 millones de dólares en 2008 a unos 4.000 millones de dólares el año pasado, de acuerdo con la Cámara de Comercio Colombo-Venezolana. □

LIMA (Reuters) - El alcalde de la capital de Perú mantuvo su liderazgo en las intenciones de voto para la próxima elección presidencial, aunque un candidato independiente podría sorprender en el 2011 ante el escaso apoyo que tienen los principales partidos políticos, mostró el lunes un sondeo.

Luis Castañeda lidera el sondeo con un 22 por ciento pero quien le pisa los talones y ha recuperado terreno es la hija del ex presidente Alberto Fujimori, quien tiene un 21 por ciento de las preferencias, agregó la encuesta realizada por la firma Ipsos Apoyo y publicada por el diario El Comercio.

El alcalde de Lima, la zona que congrega la mayor plaza electoral del país andino, es considerado como un político pragmático y amigo del libre mercado, que goza de una mayor adhesión en la capital y en la región sur del país.

La legisladora conservadora Keiko Fujimori, cuyo padre fue condenado a 25 años de prisión por abusos a los derechos humanos durante su Gobierno, encabezó por varios meses las intenciones de voto para los comicios presidenciales.

En el tercer puesto se ubicó el nacionalista y la cara más visible de la oposición, Ollanta Humala, pese a que descendió dos puntos al 13 por ciento de las preferencias.

Humala inquietó a los inversores cuando casi se convierte en presidente en el 2006 -cuando recibió el respaldo del mandatario venezolano, Hugo Chávez- con sus promesas de dar un giro en la política de libre mercado que atrajo miles de millones de dólares en inversiones extranjeras al país. La encuesta de Ipsos Apoyo fue realizada entre el 9 y 12 de febrero a una muestra de 1.200 personas. Según la empresa, el sondeo tiene un margen de error del 2,8 por ciento y un nivel de confianza del 95 por ciento.

FACTOR SORPRESA

Pero nada está dicho en Perú debido a que un 81 por ciento afirma que no se siente representado por ningún partido, lo que según analistas elevaría las probabilidades de que resulte victorioso un candidato independiente.

Sólo un 14 por ciento se siente representado por al menos 20 partidos que planean participar en las elecciones en Perú, donde un 67 por ciento cree que la democracia no funciona.

"Las condiciones que llevan a un 'outsider' han permanecido en Perú, no han cambiado (...) el sistema político no ha variado en lo sustancial mas allá del crecimiento económico", dijo Luis Benavente, analista y director de un grupo de opinión pública de la Universidad de Lima. □

Miles de mineros en huelga en Perú

LIMA (AP) - Miles de trabajadores de tres unidades importantes de la minera peruana Buenaventura continuaban en una huelga iniciada el sábado, informaron el lunes las autoridades.

La dirección nacional de Relaciones de Trabajo confirmó a la AP que la huelga fue declarada improcedente pero que los sindicatos apelaron a la decisión.

Las unidades mineras en huelga

son Uchucchacua, Antapite y Orcopampa, ubicadas en las regiones Lima, Huancavelica y Arequipa, respectivamente. Luis Castillo, secretario nacional de los trabajadores mineros, dijo a la AP que "la huelga era acatada por más de 4.000 trabajadores en las tres operaciones mineras y que el paro era por periodo indefinido hasta encontrar una solución".

Carlos Guzmán, jefe del sindicato

de Antapite, informó que los mineros en paro "reclamaban que la empresa les brinde información sobre las ganancias de los años del 2006 al 2009 para saber cuánto nos corresponde recibir exactamente por utilidades".

La minera peruana Buenaventura es la mayor productora de metales preciosos del país y las tres unidades en huelga producen principalmente oro y plata. □

Asume el nuevo Congreso en Uruguay

MONTEVIDEO (Reuters)

- El Congreso uruguayo inició el lunes una nueva legislatura, que sesionará desde el 2010 hasta el 2015, la segunda que tendrá a la izquierda controlando ambas cámaras y liderando el Gobierno. La coalición de partidos de izquierda Frente Amplio (FA) logró mantener la mayoría en el Parlamento en las elecciones generales de octubre pasado, aunque perdió dos bancas en Diputados frente a los partidos de la oposición.

En la Cámara de Senadores, el FA tendrá 16 bancas además del futuro vicepresidente del país Danilo Astori, mientras que los sectores de centroderecha Partido Nacional (PN) y Partido Colorado (PC) ocuparán nueve y cinco puestos,

respectivamente.

En la Cámara de Diputados, en tanto, el oficialismo tendrá 50 de los 99 votos. El PN le sigue con 30 diputados y el PC con 17, mientras que el Partido Independiente ocupará dos bancas.

El grupo con mayor peso dentro de la bancada de la izquierda será el Movimiento de Participación Popular (MPP), formado entre otros grupos por los ex guerrilleros del Movimiento de Liberación Nacional-Tupamaros.

La senadora Lucía Topolansky, legisladora más votada del partido ganador y esposa del presidente electo José Mujica -ambos ex guerrilleros-, fue la encargada de investir a los integrantes de la Cámara Alta el lunes, y deberá



Imagen de archivo de Danilo Astori, futuro vicepresidente de Uruguay, respondiendo a la prensa en las votaciones del año pasado, en Montevideo. Junio 28 2009. El Congreso uruguayo iniciaba el lunes una nueva legislatura, la segunda con la izquierda al frente del Gobierno y con esa fuerza política controlando ambas cámaras. REUTERS/Andres Stapff/archivo

tomar juramento al futuro ceremonia de asunción presenciada por Mujica y mandatario en marzo. La de los legisladores fue Astori desde las tribunas

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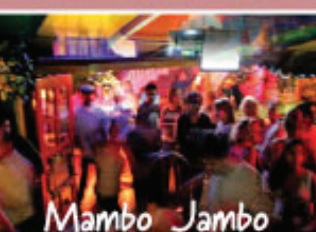
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